



**Testimony for the House Ways and Means Committee
February 3, 2021**

**HB 266- Student Education Equity Grant Program - Established
(Student Education Equity in Funding Act)**

UNFAVORABLE

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The ACLU of Maryland has long opposed taxpayer subsidies for private and religious schools, in the many and increasing forms that they have taken in our state – vouchers, subsidies for textbooks and technology, and subsidies to maintain and improve private school buildings.

This bill resembles the vast majority of the schools that receive subsidies through the BOOST program which are religious schools, which the ACLU believes is a violation of the separation of church and state. Evidence of how mixing religious doctrine with public education is clear from the exposure of one religious school that had received \$61,000 in taxpayer subsidies that had blatant policies supporting discrimination against the children of same-sex couples. While that school was removed from the BOOST program, there remain serious transparency concerns about what government dollars are supporting in religious schools and whether those policies and practices are in-line with the strong, inclusive anti-discrimination standards that govern our public schools.

To shift funds away from public schools, which educate the vast majority of students in our state, no matter who they are is unacceptable. Private and religious schools do not have to meet the same non-discrimination standards as public schools. And there are currently no clear, consistent curriculum and testing requirements that would ensure that in exchange for state subsidies, private and religious schools will be held to the same high standard as public schools.

The ACLU opposes HB 266 and urges an unfavorable report.

